

CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

History Series: The History of John Wesley and the Methodist Church

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PART 14: TURNING POINT

Recall that on May 3, 1738 John Wesley's brother Charles had a long conversation with Peter Bohler that resulted in a dramatic moment of insight where he realized that it is by "that one true living faith, whereby alone, through grace are we saved" This was reinforced for Charles by an intense experience while reading comments on Paul's letter to the Galatians on Sunday May 21. On May 24, 1738 John Wesley experiences his own moment of dramatic insight. Below is what John wrote in his journal about his famous heartwarming experience.

Wednesday May 24, 1738 - I think it was about five in the morning that I opened my Testament on those words, "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature." (II Peter 1:4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God". (Mark 12:34). In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. Oh, let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

In the evening I went very unwillingly [Note: I always take heart from that!] to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who in a more special manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This can not be faith; for where is thy joy?" Then I was taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometime giveth, sometimes withholdeth, them according to the counsels of His own will.

After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations, but I cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He "sent me help from His holy place." And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now I was always conqueror.

Thursday, May 25, 1738 - The moment I awakened, "Jesus, Master" was in my heart and in my mouth; and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eyes fixed upon Him and my soul waiting on Him continually. Being again in St. Paul's in the afternoon, I could taste the good word of God in the anthem that began, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be showing forth Thy truth from one generation to the another." Yet the enemy injected a fear, "If thou dost believe, why is there not a more sensible change?" I answered (yet not I), "that I know not. But this I know, I have now 'peace with God.' And I sin not today, and Jesus my Master has forbidden me to take thought for the tomorrow."